

Date: 27/11/2020

## **Appointment of Ms Sonia Rawat as Head of UWC Mostar**

The Board of UWC Mostar is delighted to announce the appointment of Ms Sonia Rawat as Head of UWC Mostar, starting in August 2021.

Sonia was the front-runner in a very strong field of applicants. She is exceptional in being able to bring to the position a combination of excellent teaching and leadership experience inside UWC and an impressive background in senior management and training within the corporate world.

*Sonia comments, “I am incredibly honoured and humbled to be chosen as the next Head of UWC Mostar, a College that is so well placed to spread the UWC vision and make a difference to its community and the one that it is embedded in. I look forward to strengthening the College internally and consolidating a robust outreach programme with the amazing team and Dženan who has been a very able Acting Head in an extremely difficult time.”*

Sonia takes over from the Acting Head Dženan Hakalović to whom the College owes an immense debt of gratitude. It is no exaggeration to say that Dženan was catapulted into the headship when he courageously stepped up to take the reins unexpectedly in 2019. Not only did Dženan initially ‘save the day’, but he also went on to steer the College through what many consider as one of the greatest periods of challenge UWCs worldwide have ever witnessed. His perseverance, resilience, patience, and ability to absorb the stresses and strains of this, and other significant challenges, have been remarkable. He has been a rock in testing times, his faith in the College has never faltered and his humanity always shone through in his care and concern for both staff and students. With justification, he sees himself as ‘the glue that held everything together’.

*Dženan adds, “I had been privileged with the opportunity to perform the role of the Acting Head of UWC Mostar, through a challenging period that taught all of us a lesson in humility and compassion. It is in such difficult times when we see the true value of this school and its community, its unbreakable spirit and commitment to its mission. I hope to see UWC Mostar heading towards a calmer era and a more prosperous future under Sonia’s leadership.”*

Ms Jasminka Bratic, the Chair of the Board, concludes: *“I am proud that UWC Mostar has found within its own staff such an outstanding candidate as Sonia Rawat who has both the vision and the management expertise to lead the College to a new stage in the fulfilment of its mission. I am also proud of the way in which Dženan has carried out his responsibilities as Acting Head and would like to thank him for his loyalty, his integrity, his extraordinary hard work and his willingness to use his many talents to serve the College.”*

## Biography of Ms Sonia Rawat



In August 2018 Ms Sonia Rawat joined UWC Mostar as Head of Group 1 languages and teacher of English Literature and Language. By March 2020, she was invited to join the Leadership Team, initially as Programme Manager and shortly afterwards as Director of Student Well-being. Before this she taught for 5 years at UWC Mahindra where she also served as a House Parent, living in a residence with students. Someone who loves teaching and is a born educator, Sonia came into the profession almost by chance, coming along with her husband Sunu who started as a physics teacher at UWC Mahindra. Shortly

thereafter, she was asked to become an English teacher herself.

Sonia has had a long and successful career in the corporate world where she worked for various organisations in which she reached senior positions. Her expertise focused primarily on training the trainers and creating development programmes for senior staff. In her last corporate job at the Indian BPO company WNS she had 60 people reporting into her.

It was, however, at UWC Mahindra that her UWC journey began and where she 'really started feeling the spirit and purpose of the UWC Colleges'. It was in her first project, teaching and training the students who were from the local village school (as part of the outreach initiative, Akshara), that she appreciated the immense impact of UWC.

It could be said that her academic credentials are 'very UWC' in that she studied for her first degree in English Literature at the Visva Bharati University in India, founded by the well-known poet, Rabindrath Tagore, and known for its 'progressive' educational methods. ('Visva bharati' means 'the communion of the world with India'). From there Sonia went on to study for an MA in Linguistics at the Deccan Post Graduate and Research Institute in Pune.

Sonia understands and wholeheartedly embraces what it means to be UWC and is sensitive to the huge potential of UWC Mostar in particular. Since her appointment to the Leadership Team she has made a major contribution to the articulation of UWC Mostar's mission for the 2020s and also to the development plan in support of this mission. As she says, "UWC Mostar for me represents great opportunities - the chance to do good work that will bring the recognition and the special place that it deserves among all the UWCs."